

COMMENTS ON DR RHINE'S
"TELEPATHY AND CLAIRVOYANCE RECONSIDERED"

I. BY W. WHATELY CARINGTON

WITH Dr Rhine's general approach I could hardly be more heartily in accord. Nothing is more salutary than radically to challenge views that are usually taken for granted; and valuable results may often be obtained by seeing what happens when we turn them inside out. In particular, few things would please me more than to be forced to the conclusion that it is inherently impossible to distinguish experimentally between the so-called "telepathic" and "clairvoyant" explanations of paracognitive phenomena. We should then have to admit that the alleged distinction is strictly meaningless, and that the supposed alternative hypotheses were no more than alternative linguistic ways of describing the same events. If we were then to cast out, as necessarily meaningless, the terms on which the apparent distinction depends, we should, I think, find that we had made an important step forward in our understanding of the relation between what we call "mind" and what we call "matter".

As I shall explain below, I fancy that something very like this conclusion will, in fact, be forced upon us, though the argument will not follow precisely the course just indicated, or the line taken by Dr Rhine.

My immediate reaction to the content of Dr Rhine's remarks was one of strong dissent; but I suspect that this was mainly a matter of prejudice, due to my having thought so long about, and in terms of, telepathy and to having (as I believe) produced a not implausible theory of its mechanism. I now think that I was probably wrong in this, and am provisionally prepared to go even further in certain directions than Dr Rhine does, though I cannot assent to his basic view (as I understand it) that clairvoyance is a process radically different from telepathy and alternative to it.

It seems fairly clear to me that, once we concede the claims of clairvoyance as ordinarily understood, we can never formally demonstrate "pure" telepathy, though the difficulties are not, I think, quite those envisaged by Dr Rhine. I see no sort of objection in principle, though there would be a few technical problems to be solved in practice, to the type of experiment he mentions, in which the experimenter merely images or "thinks of" a succession of card symbols, say, and records no more than whether the subject's guess was right or wrong. It is true that we should have to rely exclusively on the experimenter's statements, but I do not think that any one who is prepared to accept paranormal cognition in any form would cavil seriously over this.

The trouble is rather that the proponents of clairvoyance would be, so far as I can see, perfectly entitled to claim that any process of imaging, etc., by the agent is bound to be accompanied by corresponding and presumably characteristic changes in the brain, or perhaps by innervations of speech mechanisms, eye movements, etc.; of subliminal intensity, and that these may be clairvoyantly cognised. Against this line of argument no experiment that could possibly be conducted by incarnate man could be

proof. I agree that such an hypothesis would be extremely far-fetched, not to say fantastic, and I do not believe a word of it ; but it does not seem to me more fantastic than the kind of thing we are implicitly asked to accept in connection with clairvoyance of more ordinary type, assuming that the evidence is strong enough (as it probably is) to warrant us accepting this at all.

In the "chutes" experiment, for example, and *mutatis mutandis* for others, we are required to believe that the subject identifies a *black* symbol on a *white* card when that card is in the dark. But to say "such and such a card, now in the dark, is now white" is absurd, because "white" can only mean "reflecting light of all frequencies", whereas *ex hypothesi* there is no light to reflect. And the same, of course, for coloured counters, etc.

The clairvoyantist must therefore fall back on some story to the effect that it is the "inner nature" of the pigment or the like that is cognised. But the words "inner nature", if held to refer to something that is essentially unobservable, yet in some way responsible for the observable properties of an object, etc., means exactly nothing at all ; for no conceivable process can distinguish between the hypothesis that an object consists of properties plus an inner nature, and the hypothesis that it consists only of properties.

So far as this is concerned, I should, and do, remain an unrepentant telepathist, on the ground that although I cannot devise an experiment formally to exclude the clairvoyant alternative, I am not called upon to exclude alternatives that mean nothing.

But although I should like to see much more and more direct evidence in favour of pure clairvoyance than has yet been adduced—in particular strong positive results from Mr Parsons' machine or some close equivalent—I think we must even now cater for the probability of its being a fact in nature. But in doing so we must strenuously refuse to fob ourselves off with pseudo-explanations based on the use of such logically meaningless terms as "inner nature", "essential quiddity" or the like.

The only way out of the tangle that I can see is to say firmly that a thing *is* the totality of the observations that can be made upon it, and nothing more ; more accurately, perhaps, that it *is* a certain sequential pattern of *sensa* (or sense-data, sensibilia, cognita, or like terms). This does away with all meaningless non-sense about "direct awareness of its inner nature", but it involves divesting our irreducible "*sensa*" of any exclusively sensational (physiologically speaking) connotations.

It also involves the more revolutionary notion that a red *sensum*, say, (I should prefer to call it simply a cognisable), exists even when, as we would ordinarily put it, the object to which it belongs is in the dark ; but this appears much less objectionable than at first sight when we reflect that we can easily enough retain or recall a red *image* when the so-called "object" is darkened.

The real key to the difficulty seems to me to lie in the meaning to be attached to the word "exists". So far as I can see no meaning whatever can be assigned to the proposition "X exists now, although no-one is cognising it (or can observe it)" except by making it identically equivalent to the proposition "X will be cognised (or observed) under such and such

conditions". The notion that the continued existence of X, not at the moment cognised, implies that X is lurking somewhere behind the scenes waiting to take its cue and come on the stage again, is natural enough, but non-sensical, because it could only be verified by observing (*i.e.*, cognising) X in its hiding place.

To bring telepathy and clairvoyance into line, then, I think that we must first eject with ineluctable finality our old but tiresome friend the thing-in-itself, *Ding-an-sich* (or *Ding*, as we might call it for short). We must say that what we commonly call a material object is no more and no less than a certain sequentially patterned aggregate of cognisables, the individual existences of which do not depend on their being actually arranged in that pattern at any particular moment (or something very like this—no doubt the wording could be improved). Various circumstances may lead (I speak somewhat colloquially) to their being brought into certain relations with other groups of cognisables forming what would usually be called mental contents or the like (but, according to me, just minds or sub-systems thereof), and they are then said to be cognised by those minds. They are then, of course, if not before, subject to associative processes, etc. If the cognitive relation is brought about by associative mechanisms involving another mind or minds, we call it telepathy; if it is direct, and does not involve anything that would ordinarily be called another mind, then we call it clairvoyance.

Thus it would be fundamentally waste of time, I submit, to wrangle whether telepathy is explicable in terms of clairvoyance, or clairvoyance in terms of telepathy. Such disputations can arise only from the tacit or explicit postulation of logical monstrosities such as Egos and Dings. I think that if we stick resolutely to what alone we know, namely ordered sequences of cognised cognisables, if I may so put it, we shall find that telepathy and clairvoyance are not mutually exclusive alternatives, or even rival hypotheses, but only closely related varieties of the same fundamental process.

I need hardly say that the foregoing remarks are to be taken as highly tentative; but I feel it would be a pity to squander our energies on unprofitable controversy, and I believe that what I have said indicates approximately the lines along which we may most advantageously try to develop our thinking on these topics.

THE LOCUS STANDI OF TELEPATHY

II. BY J. HETTINGER

HAVING no personal experience of the various methods used in the card-guessing and dice-rolling experiments, I lack the necessary background for expressing an opinion as to whether the conditions of clairvoyance or of telepathy were present in the specific series carried out by Dr Rhine and others. For the same reason, I am unable to pass any comments on the issue: precognitive clairvoyance *versus* precognitive telepathy. However,